

Genesis: From Creation to New Creation

Genesis 21:1-34

"Promise, Provision, Peace"— March 5, 2023



Introduction

We all want to be happy. We want to experience joy, and we want to know contentment and satisfaction. Our experience in this world reminds us that something is broken causing us to lack lasting contentment and satisfaction. The life we are looking for is not "out there;" it is in God. ([Psalm 16:11](#)) Trying to find life apart from God is like trying to quench your thirst with salt water.

Thankfully, God has a plan to fix what is broken. ([Genesis 3:15](#)) God would send the Messiah. As we read God's word, we see in [Genesis 12](#) that the promise will be fulfilled through the offspring of Abraham and Sarah. We keep reading and waiting, as Abraham and Sarah did, and wonder, "How long?" Waiting is hard isn't it? It is really hard and painful when life is difficult or even unbearable. Yet God has His reasons for having us wait. We can be thankful for God's promises. How are we to live while we wait for the promises to be fulfilled? How can we find contentment as we sit and wait?

Sermon Outline

1. Remember God's faithfulness. Vs. 1 – 7
2. Ditch the back-up plan. Vs. 8 – 21
3. Worship where you are planted. Vs. 22 – 34

Read & Discuss

1. Read vs. 1-7

Abraham and Sarah had to wrestle with years of shame and embarrassment as they waited for a child. These verses show us a celebration. The focus is on what the Lord has done "as he promised." We are to notice the faithfulness of God. He will do exactly what He said, at the exact right time.

God made the promise to Abraham in Genesis 15. He confirmed it with Sarah in Genesis 19. The baby was named "Isaac" which means "he laughs." Every time she called his name, she would be reminded that God is faithful. God will keep His word. ([Ps. 19:7-8](#), [Proverbs 30:5](#), [John 17:17](#)) The Bible is perfect, sure, true, and without error. It is the foundation upon which we build our lives. What God says, He does. ([Matthew 5:18](#)) We can bank on it.

Yet waiting causes us to fear and fear leads us to take control. That leads to a mess. There are things in life that disappoint us, but God will not. If you hope in God, His word promises that you will not be put to shame. ([Ps. 25:3](#)) We may have to wait, but we must remember that God is faithful. This helps us fight against sin and doubt. Hide the promises of God in your heart. What are you waiting for? What is the theme of your persistent prayers? Are there times when you think that God won't come through? Think about a promise of God that you struggle to believe. What difference would it make if you believed that promise?

Additional Reading: *Genesis 15 and 19*

2. Read vs. 8-21

The joy and celebration we see in the first verses of this chapter carry over here, yet Sarah's joy sours quickly because of Ishmael's mocking laughter. Ever since Sarah suggested that Abraham have a child with Hagar, there has been conflict which is now heightened. Envy and resentment are on display and Ishmael's expectations of his future are shattered. This isn't the first time that we've seen this in Genesis. Cain killed Abel in a fit of jealousy.

Both mothers want to protect their children, and Abraham is caught in the middle. We shouldn't be surprised at the conflict. Marriage is designed to be between one man and one woman. When you go outside of God's plan, there is trouble. In chapter 16, Abraham and Sarah were tired of waiting. They saw a shortcut. Forgiven sin often comes with consequences that must be dealt with. Thankfully, God's grace is there to help with the consequences.

In [Galatians 4:21-31](#), Paul draws a spiritual example. We are saved by faith in Christ alone. Our attempts to clean ourselves up and do good works will not make us right before God. However, good works **are** evidence

of a changed life. The conflict in Genesis 21 is a picture of the conflict in our hearts. Are you trusting in Christ alone or in your good works to be saved? We must cast out any plan of self-reliance and good works to win God's favor.

The idea of saying, "good-bye" to Ishmael is heartbreaking for Abraham. God comes to him in his distress and promises to take care of Ishmael and Hagar and make him a great nation. Abraham believes that God will do this. The difference between Isaac and Ishmael are explained further in [Romans 9:7](#). It is through Isaac that the offspring will come. He was the son of promise. Being a physical descendent (a Jew) doesn't make you a son of Abraham. Being born in a Christian home with Christian parents doesn't either. You must make a choice. It is by grace through faith.

Notice God's heart in this. Are there times that you consider yourself to be kinder than God? Would you do things differently than you feel God is doing them? This passage makes it very clear that Sarah is not kinder than God. There are things that are difficult to understand, but here you see the kindness of God even in His election.

In Chapter 16, God **saw** Hagar in her distress. Here, God **hears** her. They are rescued. God's promise to Abraham in regards to Ishmael would come to pass. God is using this "good-bye" in Abraham's life to prepare him for what God will ask of him in chapter 22. Are you tired of waiting? Do you wonder if God sees and hears your plight and prayers? Are you secretly holding onto our backup plan? We will see sinful shortcuts. We must abandon those. Trusting in anything other than Jesus will lead to disaster.

Where are you looking for life? What are you building your life upon? Is what you are trusting in faithful? Is it reliable? If you are trusting in yourself, that is not a good place on which to build your life. God is faithful. He will come through. That means He will be faithful to judge sin. That is the bad news. The good news - the Gospel - is the promise of a Savior. At the right time, God was faithful to His promise. Turn from your self-improvement plan to Christ.

Additional Reading: *Genesis 4, 3 and 16*

3. Read vs. 22-34

We met King Abimelech in [chapter 20](#). It is surprising how much honor he gives to Abraham based on what happened then. Abimelech reminds Abraham to deal honestly with him, but he also knows that God is with Abraham. They are here to make a covenant of peace.

In the very beginning, God's promise to Abraham included a promised child and a promised land. In verses 1-21, the focus is on the promise of a child. In verses 22-34, the focus is on the promise of the land. Here, he is in the land of the Philistines. In one sense, the land is Abraham's, but it isn't fully realized. We are told twice that Abraham is a sojourner. God made promises that He will fulfill in His time. [Hebrews 11:13](#)

[Ecclesiastes 3:11](#) tells us that God has put eternity in our hearts. If we trust in the things of this world to find satisfaction, we will not find it. We are meant to find lasting satisfaction in the eternal God. Abraham is still learning that. Abraham planted a tamarisk tree by the well and called upon the everlasting God. The tree may remind you of the tree talked about in [Psalm 1](#). That tree can flourish in the wilderness because its roots grow deep. That's how sojourners, like us, can flourish and have joy and life even in the waiting room. What are you doing to make sure your roots grow deep? Is there still something of this world on which you are depending to give you satisfaction? We can lean on the promises of God.

Prayer of Response

- 1) After hearing God's Word, what sin do I need to *confess*? From what do I need to *repent*?
- 2) How should my life be lived this week based on what I have heard? What should I *understand, believe, desire, or do*?

Spend time praying together in response to God's word asking for His help and greater faith to follow Him in the week to com. If you missed the sermon on Sunday or would like to listen again, visit our website at

Next week's sermon text: we turn to [Genesis 22:1-24](#) "The Lord Will Provide"